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SUBJECT: MEDIA REACTION REPORT - UN Summit Afghanistan Katrina  
PARIS - Friday, September 16, 2005

(A) SUBJECTS COVERED IN TODAY'S REPORT:

- [1](#)1. UN Summit
- [1](#)2. Afghanistan
- [1](#)3. Katrina

B) SUMMARY OF COVERAGE:

A variety of stories dominate today's front pages, with Le Figaro devoting its lead to the threat of an Avian flu epidemic. President Bush's call at the UN for the sharing of information between nations and Villepin's similar preventive appeal made from the UN are noted. Today's major international stories include the elections in Afghanistan: for Liberation, although "democracy in Afghanistan will not look like our western democracies, we cannot deny the benefits of a democratic ballot." In Le Figaro, defense correspondent Arnaud de La Grange writes about the different American and French perceptions of the operations in Afghanistan. (See Part C) Another major story, which continues to elicit commentary, is the UN Summit, with a majority of the reports concentrating on PM De Villepin's performance and his "return to the scene of the crime." For France Soir, Villepin is "increasingly looking like a Presidential candidate." Le Monde headlines: "Bush Surprises the UN By Pleading for the Poor." Its editorial is devoted to the usefulness of the organization. (See Part C)

The German elections are also a major story. The report in France Soir is titled: "Merkel Hostile to Turkey's EU Membership" and concentrates on the Turkish immigrant population's intention to vote for the SPD. Le Figaro interviews U.S. political expert Gary Schmitt, Director of the Project for the New American Project. Schmitt asserts that Merkel "will break with the SPD's anti-American stance" and a policy based on "mistrust of the U.S." He contends that in France, Sarkozy "echoes her vision." "If Merkel and Sarkozy are elected, it will impact quickly and significantly on trans-Atlantic and intra-European relations."

Right-of-center weekly Le Point devotes its editorial to Katrina and the "Lessons of a Pre-Programmed Disaster." (See Part C) In Les Echos, commentator Paul Fabra writes: "Between the modern military doctrine of eliminating reserves and the negligence of the authorities in bringing timely assistance to the New Orleans refugees there is more than a simple analogy."

(C) SUPPORTING TEXT/BLOCK QUOTES:

UN Summit

"Dear UN"

Left-of-center Le Monde in its unsigned editorial (09/16):  
"The summit ended without firm decisions about the expected reforms due to the divergences between North and South. But the UN has the merit of existing. and offering a venue for debate and at times confrontation. There is an undeniable 'UN effect,' which has operated a change on President Bush: he gave a speech very different from past ones and acknowledged that 'anger and despair' could fuel terrorism." Villepin's 'reality as it is' approach may have impacted on the U.S. President. The calamitous situation in Iraq as well as the incompetence of the authorities after Katrina have probably led President Bush to be less arrogant."

"350 Treaties Awaiting the Signature of the U.S."  
Anne Bauer in right-of-center Les Echos (09/16): "In many Embassies around the world, and at NGO headquarters, annoyance with America's unilateralism and its scorched earth technique is obvious. By questioning the final declaration. John Bolton opened the floodgates to a river of amendments from countries which oppose the UN. Yet America's unilateralism is nothing new. This attitude is a major stumbling block within the organization. Whatever Europe's efforts to restore international law, which is what the UN represents, nothing will be possible without the U.S. In this respect, the summit cannot be viewed as a total failure: President Bush took part in it and emphasized his priorities in international

cooperation: the fight against terrorism, health, trade and development. Which is better than nothing, even if social rights, the environment, culture and disarmament were noticeably absent."  
Afghanistan

#### "Dangers"

Patrick Sabatier in left-of-center Liberation (09/16):  
"Democracy cannot be decreed, it must be built. And in Afghanistan, this can be done only slowly. In spite of the semblance of peace, Afghanistan is still at war, with the Taliban still terrorizing a large portion of the population. The Americans, who are fighting them, have this year suffered the most losses since 2001. Karzai is dependent upon the Americans and international aid. He has bought his stability through tolerance for the poppy industry, which represents 60 percent of the nation's GNP. Afghan 'democracy' will have very little to do with what we mean by democracy. But we must not deny the benefits of a democratic ballot. that will change the status of women and give voters the first opportunity in Afghanistan's history to voice their views. The danger lies in the West's impatience: too eager or too discouraged, the West wants to disengage from Afghanistan. This has become clear in the debate that opposes the U.S. to its NATO allies. Even if imperfect, Afghanistan's democracy needs to be helped and defended. There is no other alternative to terror and chaos."

#### "Franco-American Differences on NATO Mission"

Arnaud de La Grange in right-of-center Le Figaro (09/16): "The Americans would love to enroll more allies in Afghanistan. to stabilize the country. This question has triggered new friction between the U.S. and France, although the confrontation is softer and not as frontal as the one over Iraq. Yet the conflict is real. The French Defense Minister has reiterated her opposition to a merging of the missions in Afghanistan. even if she insists that France is not opposed to a rapprochement of the operations. which have different objectives: one is a peace- keeping mission, while the other remains a war operation. The French insist there is no ideological confrontation. While some believe that Washington wants the missions to merge in order to begin a disengagement from Afghanistan."

#### Katrina

##### "Lessons of a Pre-Programmed Disaster"

Claude Imbert in right-of-center weekly Le Point (09/16):  
"America never does anything in half measures. Both 9/11 and Katrina were huge tragedies. But those tempted to gloat over America's misery should look at the exceptional nature of Hurricane Katrina., even if the tragedy was in the cards. The negligence regarding preventive work on levees and the failure to properly evacuate its population are the causes for America's humiliation. But will this tragedy, which has destroyed New Orleans, destroy the Bush Presidency? Hardly. After the initial lack of efficiency, both the federal government and the private sector have bounced back. Nevertheless, the overconfidence and euphoria of the Bush administration, which has often times come close to impertinence, have suffered. The American model has not been shattered, but it does come out somewhat tarnished." STAPLETON